

TRANSPORTATION

One of the most important issues in Bellevue and in the entire Central Puget Sound region is transportation. The Census provides information about Bellevue residents' trends in commuting to work, and also information on vehicle ownership.

Commuting to Work

Commuting information is important in that it reflects how residents of Bellevue get to their jobs, and how long it takes. This information says much about our transportation infrastructure investments and transportation choices, and is an important indicator of how growth management policies are working, in particular policies that encourage housing and jobs in close proximity to each other. Commuting information for Bellevue in 1990 and 2000 is summarized below.

Commuting to Work Data for Bellevue

The table below summarizes commuting trends for Bellevue residents per the 1990 and 2000 Census.

Commuting Patterns for Bellevue Residents 1990 and 2000		
Subject	1990	2000
% of workers* driving to work alone (single occupant vehicle)	77.4	74.0
% of workers carpooling or vanpooling	9.2	10.6
% of workers using public transportation	6.6	6.7
% of workers working at home	3.9	5.1
Mean travel time to work in minutes	21.4	21.6
<i>*Workers age 16 and over.</i>		

As indicated in the table, while the percentage of Bellevue residents who commute to work alone in their cars in single-occupant vehicles (SOV) is still fairly high, it decreased between 1990 and 2000. It is important to note that even though this is only a reduction of 3.5 percent since 1990, this in fact represents thousands of fewer trips per day. It is also interesting to note that as compared to 1990 a higher percentage of Bellevue residents are not only carpooling and riding public transit to work, but are also working at home.

One interesting finding is that average commute times have stayed relatively stable in Bellevue since 1990. This is somewhat surprising since it is generally acknowledged that traffic congestion has worsened throughout the region. This trend will be discussed more on the following page.

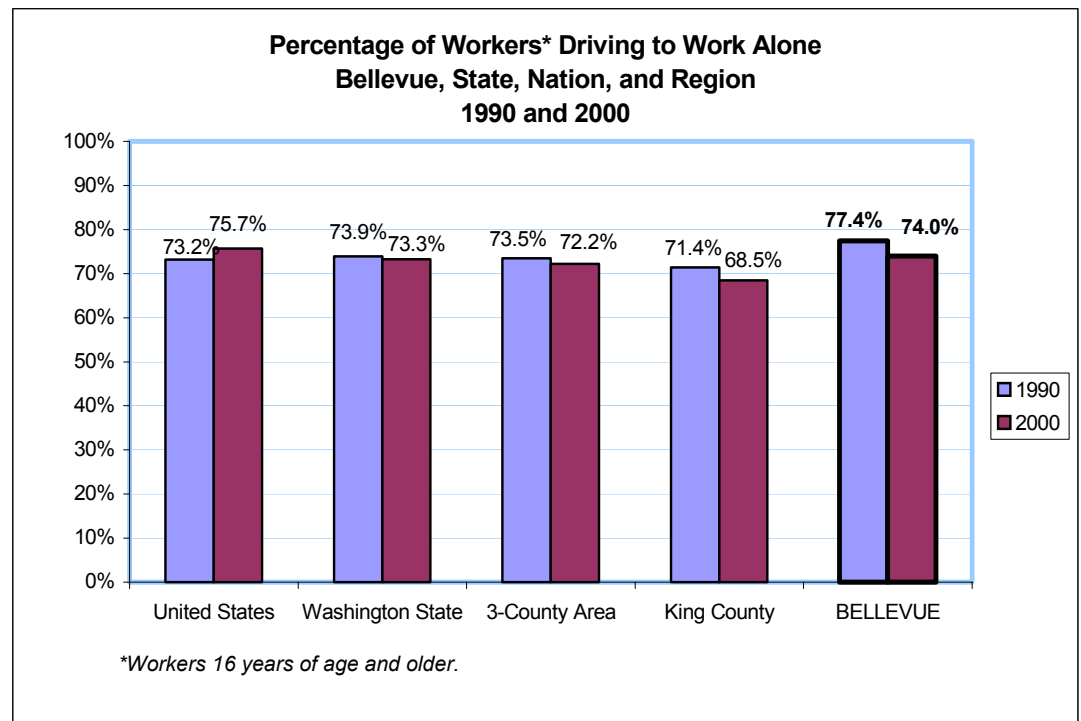
Commuting to Work – Regional and National Comparisons

The table and chart below show comparisons on commuting trends between Bellevue and other jurisdictions.

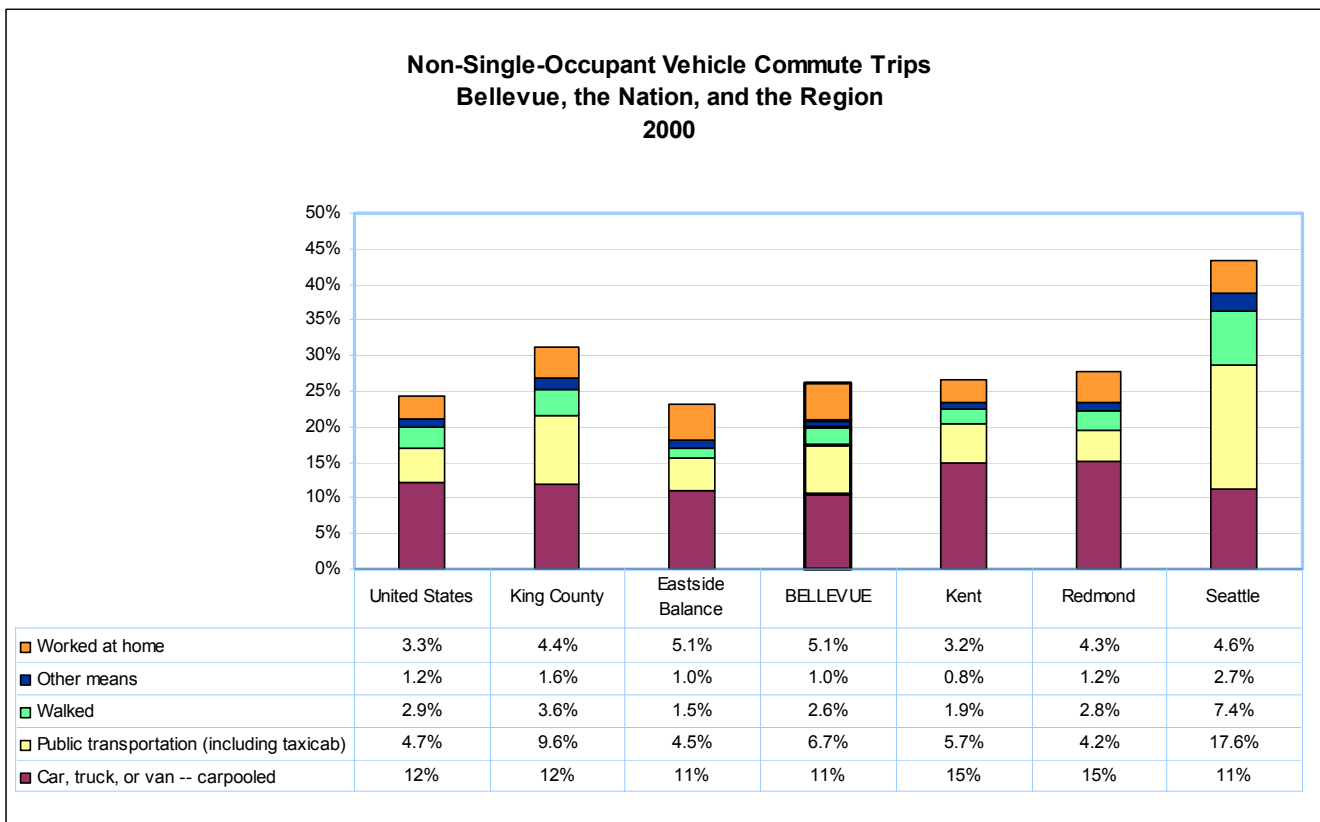
Commuting to Work Bellevue and the Region 2000								
Subject	King County	BELLEVUE	Eastside Balance	Redmond	Kirkland	Seattle	Renton	Kent
% of workers* driving to work alone (SOV)	68.7	74.0	76.8	76.1	76.0	56.5	72.8	73.5
% of workers carpooling	12.0	10.6	11.1	11.3	9.8	11.2	15.2	14.8
% of workers using public transportation	9.6	6.7	4.5	4.2	5.5	17.6	6.2	5.7
% of workers working at home	4.4	5.1	5.1	4.3	5.3	4.6	2.6	3.2
Mean travel time to work in minutes	26.5	21.6	26.1	20.7	21.9	24.8	27.7	28.7

As shown in the table above, median commute times are lower in Bellevue and other Eastside cities than they are generally in King County, and in Seattle. This may reflect the fact that there has been robust job growth on the Eastside since 1990, and there are now more job opportunities on the Eastside for Eastside residents.

As shown in the chart to the right, the number and percentage of American commuters who drive alone to work is increasing. This continues a trend from the 1980s, when the percentage of SOV commuters nationally increased substantially from 64 percent to 73 percent. These same trends are found in most other parts of the country; in fact,



Washington and Oregon are the only two states in the country where SOV percentages went *down* statewide between 1990 and 2000.



As shown in the chart above, percentages of work trips using public transit is still fairly low in most cities outside of Seattle. This reflects lower rates of transit service in most suburban jurisdictions. It will be interesting to track how increased bus service outside of Seattle, which has been adopted as part of King County Metro’s 6-year plan, will affect transit commuting rates in the future. The percentage of commuters who commute via carpools has been rising generally throughout the county, and are higher than 10 percent in many jurisdictions.

With regard to travel trends throughout the region generally, data collected by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) show that while vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the region is growing, it is now growing at the same rate as population growth in the region. This contrasts with the 1980s, when VMT in the region grew at three times the rate of population growth. This may be another factor in stabilization of commute times and mode splits.

For more information on travel trends, see the PSRC website at <http://www.psrc.org/datapubs/pubs/trends/t2trend.pdf>.

KEY FINDINGS

Commuting

- The percentage of employed residents in Bellevue who commuted to work alone decreased from 77.4 percent in 1990 to 74 percent in 2000.
- Average commute times stayed relatively stable in Bellevue between 1990 and 2000, increasing only from 21.4 minutes in 1990 to 21.6 minutes in 2000.

Vehicle Ownership

Trends in vehicle ownership reflect and help support other demographic trends, such as household composition and size (see Households chapter). Vehicle ownership information is also a reflection on the degree of transportation choices there are in a community; typically the higher the percentage of households that do not own a car (or only one car), the higher the amount of transportation alternatives to driving.

Vehicle Ownership in Bellevue

The table below summarizes vehicle ownership trends in Bellevue since 1990.

Vehicle Ownership Patterns for Bellevue Residents 1990 and 2000		
Subject	1990	2000
% of households owning no vehicle	4.5	5.6
% of households owning one vehicle	31.9	36.1
% of households owning two vehicles	42.1	41.6
% of households owning three or more vehicles	21.5	16.7

While the majority of households in Bellevue still own 2 or more vehicles, a growing percentage of households in 2000 own 1 or no vehicles. The percentage increase in households that do not own any vehicle represents a growth in nearly 1,000 households that now do not own a vehicle. While the percentage of households that do not own a vehicle is fairly small citywide, it is higher for some groups, such as senior citizens; over 13 percent of households that are headed by a senior do not own a vehicle. Overall, in 2000 there were over 2,500 total households in Bellevue that did not own a vehicle.

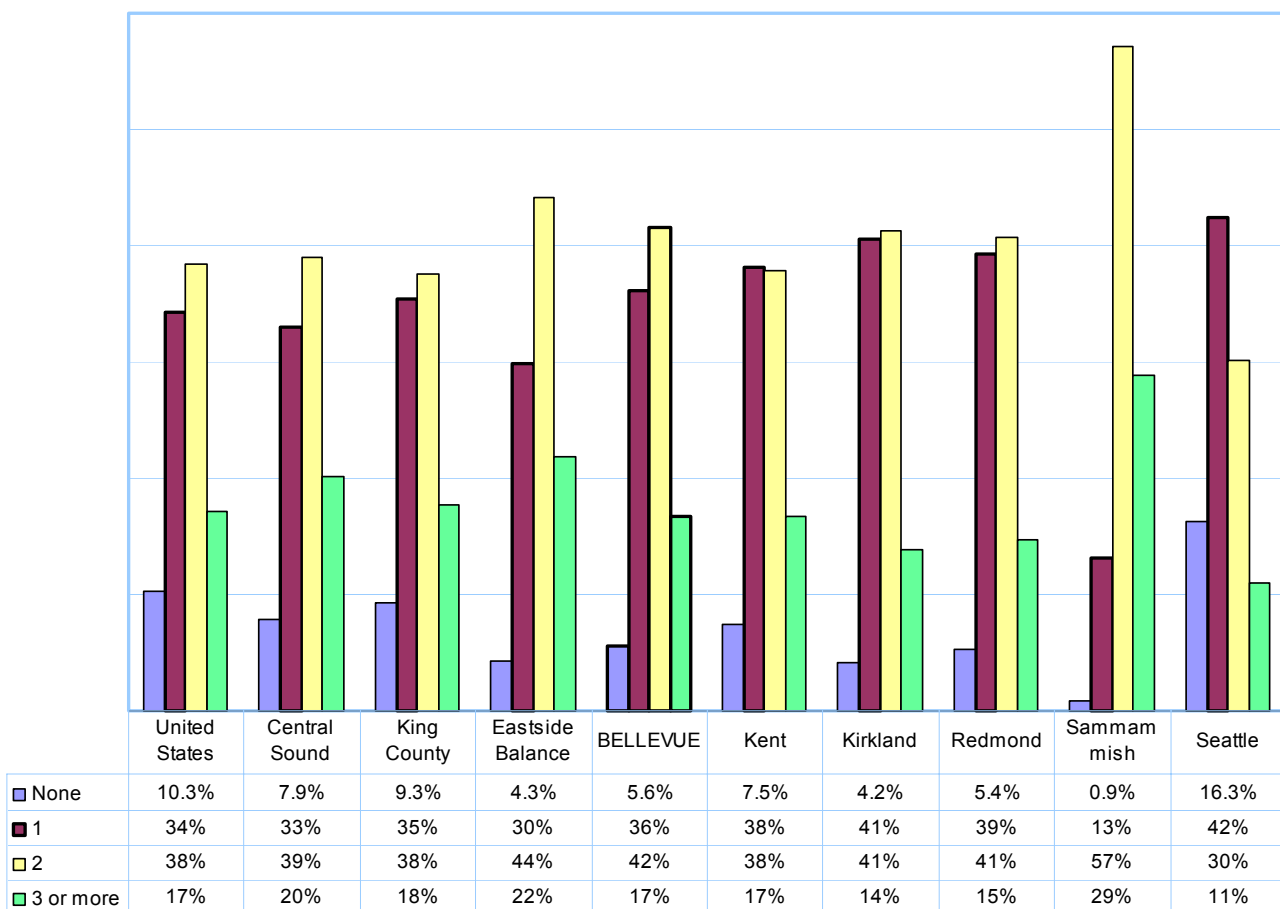
In 2000 there were approximately 19,000 households in Bellevue that owned 1 or no vehicle. This reflects other trends occurring in the community that were discussed in the Households chapter: a larger percentage of households with 1 or 2 residents, and an increasingly older and aging population. It may also reflect an increase in housing opportunities in the downtown area, where services, jobs, and housing are in close proximity to one another.

Vehicle Ownership - Regional and National Comparisons

The chart below summarizes vehicle ownership information for Bellevue and other areas.

As shown in the chart, Bellevue had a higher percentage of households with no vehicle or one vehicle than the balance of the Eastside, but lower percentages than the county and region as a whole. The county and regional numbers are highly influenced by Seattle, which has very high percentages of households with no or one vehicle.

**Vehicles Available per Household
Bellevue, the Nation, and the Region
2000**



It is interesting to note that over 10 percent of all households in the United States own no vehicle. These numbers are likely influenced by dense central cities like New York and Chicago, which have numbers of total households and high percentages of households with no vehicles.

KEY FINDINGS

Vehicle Ownership

- Vehicle ownership patterns have shifted in Bellevue since 1990, with a higher number and percentage of households owning one or no vehicle. This in part reflects the rising number of 1-person households in the City.
- Bellevue households are less likely to own two or more vehicles than households in the balance of the Eastside or the region as a whole, but are more likely to own two or more vehicles than King County households as a whole, and in particular households in Seattle.

Potential Implications of Transportation Characteristics for Bellevue

Commuting information (average commute times and mode splits) apply to Bellevue residents, not to all those who work in Bellevue (although there are a certain percentage of Bellevue residents who also work in the city, as discussed in the Economics chapter). Mode shares for people who work in downtown Bellevue, for example, show an SOV rate of less than 70 percent.

Several factors are likely contributing to stabilization of average commute times in Bellevue. These include more job opportunities on the eastside for eastside residents, and an increased number of Bellevue residents carpooling or working at home. This information on commuting patterns and commute times suggest people making shifts in job and location behavior.

The trends in commuting and travel times in Washington and Oregon, compared to the rest of the country, may be indicative of the fact that most regions in the United States do not have growth management planning mandates. Increasing levels of urban sprawl typically translate into increasing levels of SOV trips and commute times. The trend of lowering percentage of SOV commuters in Washington, King County, and Bellevue is potentially an indicator that growth management policies in this region are being implemented.

More households without a vehicle means that there will be an increasing reliance among thousands of Bellevue residents on transportation alternatives, a trend that will likely continue into the future, particularly as the population continues to age, and there is a higher percentage of seniors (see Households chapter).